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## 2 buildings to be razed by end of year

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By Eric Robinette

**FAIRFIELD** — Two long-abandoned buildings in the city will come down around the time 2013 arrives to make way for a new Kroger gas station.

The former Flowerama and the former Taco Bell, both near the intersection of Pleasant Avenue and Nilles Road, will be leveled around the beginning of the new year as the Kroger construction gets under way, officials said.

Kroger is finalizing the transaction with the city, but “definitely within the next three months, the building will come down,” said Monte Chesko, a real estate manager for Kroger.

The properties, which are currently owned by a trust, have been vacant for some time. The former Flowerama has been empty for two years and the former Taco Bell for four years, said Tim Bachman, the city’s director of development.

The former Taco Bell is grown over with vegetation, and an awning over the old drive-through window is broken and hanging down.

The city maintains some abandoned properties and was maintaining the former Flowerama and Taco Bell properties in 2011.

“We maintain the foreclosed and abandoned properties ... if nobody cuts them, we get a contractor for the grass-cutting, and we put the cost and a \$100 free on their tax bills,” Bachman said.

However, the city does not strictly define what is an “eyesore,” he said. Being a city only since 1955, Fairfield doesn’t have many aging buildings like some older cities, such as Hamilton and Middletown.

“That has a lot to do with it. We don’t have a list of 20 to 100 eyesores,” he said.

The city uses a proactive approach to maintaining properties, including code enforcement officers who cite property owners for violations, including high weeds, junk cars and brush piles.

The city will then send the owner a letter asking them to address the issues within a certain period of time. If that deadline is not met, they are summoned to municipal court. The city uses the same approach in responding to complaints brought to their attention, Bachman said.

As of October of this year, the city has recorded 1,681 zoning/maintenance violations and has maintained 115 of those properties, Bachman said.

Unlike other Kroger fuel stations, the one in Fairfield will have a complete 1,000 square-foot convenience store, which was designed to comply with Fairfield's zoning codes. City planners had rejected a previous kiosk design. It is expected to be complete by the end of next year.

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